

insular plants and animals than now survive, amongst which birds played a particularly important role both as a source of fertility derived from the sea, and as the main terrestrial vertebrates. It is time that the pathetically few surviving relatively unspoilt examples, some of the best of which still remain under British administration, received much more study and conservation.

766th Meeting

At the 766th Meeting of the Club, held on 22 July 1986, (*Bull. Br. Orn. Cl.* 106: 89) Dr Alan Tye spoke on "Birds in Sierra Leone". He described the main types of habitat and discussed the bird species which inhabited them, showing slides of many of them. He explained the serious threat to forest species, because of loss of habitat.

Birds on Moheli and Grande Comore (Comoro Islands) in February 1975

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These observations were made in February 1975 as a preliminary to a further visit to investigate certain anomalies in the avifauna left unresolved by the BOU centenary expedition of 1958 (Benson 1960); in the event it was not possible to arrange the fuller study. Our observations (not written up at the time in expectation of the more detailed work to come) complement recent detailed studies in the islands by the Musée Royale de l'Afrique Centrale in Tervuren (Louette 1984b), and give some information for the interval between the previous reports (Benson 1960, Forbes-Watson 1969, Salvan 1972) and the recent work. The Comores have suffered severe deforestation since Benson's visit (Anon. 1979, Cheke & Dahl 1981: 230, Baudon 1983: 19). Moheli, the most forested but least populated island, has been the least affected, although for this reason it has been ominously suggested that people from the overcrowded island of Anjouan be resettled there (Baudon 1983: 17).

Between 14 and 27 February we spent a total of 9 ornithological man-days on Moheli (ASC & AWD) and 2 on Grande Comore (AWD), with a few other scattered observations. We were unable to be on the islands together as planned, but a night's overlap enabled ASC to brief AWD on observations to follow up on Moheli.

Benson (1960) reported 2 sympatric species of *Hypsipetes* bulbuls and *Nesillas* warblers on Moheli, an unexpected situation we wanted to compare with our studies on related forms in the Mascarenes (ASC) and the Seychelles (AWD) (Cheke 1987a, b, Diamond 1980). Moheli was the only Indian Ocean island with congeneric bulbul and warbler pairs: and it was not known how they partitioned the habitat. At that time the Malagasy warbler genus *Nesillas* was generally considered congeneric with the Seychelles/Mascarene genus *Bebrornis* (e.g. Benson 1960, Mayr 1971; see Diamond 1980) which we had studied in detail. Serious doubt had been cast on this affinity by A. D. Forbes-Watson and we wanted to see it for ourselves.

Subsequent to his published report, A. D. Forbes-Watson saw an unidentified warbler on Grande Comore which he thought might be *Nesillas mariae* (the Moheli endemic) or an undescribed species. Benson (1960) had reported a

marked plumage polymorphism in the *Hypsipetes* bulbuls there – unique for an Indian Ocean island with *Hypsipetes* species.

On this short visit we were not in a position to resolve these questions, and this report is largely of general observations on the avifauna, but the warblers and the bulbuls are treated more fully; Louette & Herremans (1985b) have recently tackled the bulbuls in detail. No other ornithologists have visited the islands in February (in the middle of the rains), so our breeding records add to what little is known of seasonality in the Comores. ASC collected local names at Miringoni on Moheli, several of which were 'new'; the word for 'bird' was *nyuni*. A note on the former occurrence (previously overlooked) of the green pigeon *Treron australis* on Anjouan and Grande Comore is added as an appendix.

SYSTEMATIC LIST OF OBSERVATIONS

Fieldwork on Moheli was done principally in the lower part of the hills inland of the airstrip at Bandaressalam (near Fomboni), and on the southwest of the island between the coast at Miringoni and the crest of the island's central spine at the Chalet de St-Antoine (697 m). On Grande Comore the forest at Nioumbadjou was the focus of activity. Place names are as given on the IGN 1: 50,000 contoured maps 'Moheli' and 'Grande Comore' (2 sheets) (undated, c. 1958); M = Moheli, GC = Grande Comore. Local names are given in square brackets after the scientific name: ** indicates a previously unrecorded name (see Benson 1962), * a name not previously known on Moheli, § a name apparently known only to one informant, and (v) a variant of, but not identical to, a previously known name; other comments are also in () brackets. In the transliteration 'ch' is hard (as in 'cheese'), 'u' is short like 'oo' in 'cook' while 'oo' is long as in 'cool'.

The annotated list only includes significant records; other species seen are summarised at the end.

AUDUBON'S SHEARWATER *Puffinus lherminieri*

M. One heard at night at St-Antoine, 23 Feb. Not previously recorded from the Comores, and since described as a new race, *Pl. temptator* by Louette & Herremans (1985a) from a specimen taken at the same locality.

LESSER FRIGATE BIRD *Fregata ariel* [na'ande (v)]

M. Up to 100 frigates gathered over the coast near Miringoni some evenings, and up to 8 were seen at Bandaressalam. No adults were seen, but some older immatures were beginning to show the white flank patches characteristic of *F. ariel*. Benson (1960) saw unidentified frigates, but Forbes-Watson (1969), who only saw 2 birds, confirmed this species on Moheli. In 1983 Draulans *et al.* (1985) found a roost of several hundred frigates, mostly *F. ariel*, on Magnougni islet, south of Moheli.

GREAT EGRET *Egretta alba*

M. One on the shore at Miringoni, 17 Feb. A rare resident in the Comores recorded nesting only on Moheli, in very small numbers (Benson 1960, Forbes-Watson 1969).

DIMORPHIC EGRET *E. gularis* [mgweda** (? this species)]

M. One (white phase) on the shore at Bandaressalam, 15 Feb. Also there, 2 white egrets, either this species or Cattle Egrets *Ardeola ibis*, in a distant tree. The only previous confirmed record for the islands was also on Moheli (Forbes-Watson 1969), namely *E. garzetta*.

MALAGASY HARRIER *Circus maillardi macrosceles* [boondi-bwakanggi** (however *bwankanga* = *Accipiter* on GC – Benson 1962)]

M. Seen briefly twice over plantations at Miringoni; seen at Hoani, and another seen above Bandaressalam, 19 Feb, both over secondary forest. A pair hunting over slash & burn clearances above Hamba, 19 Feb. Resident, more frequent on Moheli than the other islands (Benson 1960, Forbes-Watson 1969).

MADAGASCAR GOSHAWK *Accipiter francesii* [chipangga**]

M. Not seen by us. R. Legrand reported finding a nest near St-Antoine. There are no formal records of this species from Moheli.

MOORHEN *Gallinula chloropus*

M. R. Legrand reported them from the lake of Dziani Boundouni at the east end of the island, and had once seen one at the river mouth at Miringoni. Not seen by us, and not formally recorded for Moheli.

CRESTED TERN *Sterna bergii* [nyamande]

M. Three on Miringoni beach 19 Feb. and 2 at Bandaressalam, 20 Feb. The only previous Moheli record is Benson's (1960), but the species has since been recorded by Draulans *et al.* (1985). GC. A flock of 50+ birds noted as "seagulls" from the air while leaving Moroni airfield, 15 Feb, may have been these large terns; a few more "gulls" were seen over the sea during the flight to Moheli together with unidentified larger dark seabirds (possibly Brown Boobies *Sula leucogaster*).

MADAGASCAR TURTLE DOVE *Streptopelia picturata comorensis* [poodji; culicul*§]

M. This red-headed form was common at Bandaressalam and up to the lower limit of native forest (c. 350 m) at Miringoni; this suggests a preference for exotic rather than native forest, a distinction not noted by Benson (1960) or Forbes-Watson (1969).

AFRICAN GREEN PIGEON *Treron australis griveaudi* [verinadabu* (cf. Fischer 1949 for GC/Anjouan)]

M. Only seen at Miringoni in secondary forest or coconut plantations mixed with mangos and other trees at c. 75-150 m alt:— 1 in secondary forest, 17 Feb; 1 feeding on ground with 3 Madagascar Turtle Doves under coconuts *Cocos nucifera*, and another singing nearby in a mango *Mangifera indica*, 18 Feb. The song was noted as "wheoo rnk rnk (mynah-like whistle followed by frog-like grunts)". This race was included in the *Red Data Book* (King 1978-79), presumably on grounds of restricted range. Cheke (1980), Collar & Stuart (1985) regarded it as "common" in 1975. This was perhaps rather overstating the case; but the ease with which it was seen does not suggest rarity, and indeed Benson (1960) thought it probably not uncommon (his expedition collected 4). (*Treron* spp. are notoriously hard to see in foliage). This form, like other forest birds on Moheli, would be threatened by any serious inroads on the hill forests.

COMORO BLUE PIGEON *Alectroenas gzanzeni* [nyingga; mo'ya* (recorded for 'pigeon ramier' (? = *arquatrix*) by Fischer 1949)]

M. One at c. 400 m in native forest above Miringoni, 18 Feb; 1 in secondary forest dominated by *Pterocarpus* at c. 300 m above Hoani, 19 Feb; 2 in secondary forest at c. 150 m behind Bandaressalam, 20 Feb. 3 of these observations were of birds briefly glimpsed flashing through the forest, and

suggest that the species was common but difficult to see. Benson (1960) implied that it was largely confined to native forest.

VASA *Coracopsis vasa* [kwendzu, go'endzu, kuintzu]

M. Frequently seen from lowland coconut plantations at Miringoni up to the native ridge forest at St-Antoine. As it was clearly given to long flights after food it was difficult to assess real abundance. One of 2 birds seen closely near St-Antoine on 17 Feb was in body and tail moult. Very vocal; more often heard than seen in forest. The distribution seemed unchanged since 1958 (Benson 1960).

GREY-HEADED LOVEBIRD *Agapornis cana* [karrarrowki]

M. Seen regularly in secondary vegetation at Bandaressalam and Miringoni, and on the path from Miringoni to Hoani (the coast road was impassible in the rains). A pair using a hole in a dead tree above Hamba appeared from their behaviour to have eggs, 19 Feb. Behind Bandaressalam on the same day 2 birds feeding on the ground were eating unopened flowering shoots of grasses, *Stenotaphrum micranthum* (identified by the Mauritius Herbarium) and another species. Benson (1960) only saw this species on Moheli near Fomboni, and Forbes-Watson (1969) not at all.

BLACK SWIFT *Apus barbatus*

M. 50+ over Miringoni, 17 Feb. The only previous record for Moheli is Forbes-Watson's (1969).

BLUE-CHEEKED BEE-EATER *Merops superciliosus* [diwindiwi** (cf. Palm Swift)]

M. A few at Hoani and Hamba, 16 Feb. A juvenile above Miringoni on 18 Feb brought a large (c. 40 mm) cicada to a perch and had great difficulty in reducing it sufficiently (by beating it on a branch) to swallow it. The age of this bird confirms Benson's (1960) breeding dates (eggs laid in late Oct or early Nov, Mayotte). Ten birds seen over Bandaressalam on 22 Feb were in early-mid wing moult.

CUCKOO-ROLLER *Leptosomus discolor* [kwe'u-kwe'u]

M. A pair seen at a distance over mid-altitude native forest above Miringoni, 18 Feb. There is some confusion amongst locals between this species and the Vasa; the local name is much closer to one of the Vasa's calls ('kweo kweo') than to the drawn-out 'ki-ooo' of the Cuckoo-roller, and ASC found *kwe'u-kwe'u* used for the Vasa as well as *kwendzu* and variants. Benson (1960) recorded a decline on Anjouan since the turn of the century, and our solitary record suggests a recent decline also on Moheli.

MADAGASCAR CUCKOO-SHRIKE *Coracina cinerea*

M. Only seen in native forest near St-Antoine at c. 600 m, where a pair was seen on 17 Feb, a family party (a pair and 2 juveniles) on 18 Feb and more birds on 24 Feb. The party was gleaning on leaf-bases and leaves within reach of their perches; one young was seen to jump-snatch at a flying insect. The song-call was noted as *wheoo wee whi whi wheoo wee*; they also gave an occasional short *whic*, a fluty *tiooi*, a rasping chatter, and a subsong (given by an immature or first year bird) a 'very quiet reflective chattering warble'. Benson (1960) found it uncommon on Moheli, and Forbes-Watson (1969) failed to see any.

Benson (1960) described the birds on Moheli as a new race, *moheliensis*, but only had one female in his series, a bird with uniformly pale underparts. In each of the 2 pairs seen by ASC, both birds had dark grey heads and throats, as

described by Benson for 2 of his males, while the 2 presumed immatures on 18 Feb had white throats and paler grey crowns (like Benson's female; his other 2 males were intermediate). One of these presumed young, being fed by an 'adult' (i.e. a grey-throated bird), showed some scaly feathers on the back and slight dark spotting on the side of the breast reminiscent of the immature plumage of Mascarene birds (*C. typica*, *C. newtoni*, pers. obs.). The inference is that all pale-throated birds are immatures, and that they need 2 seasons to reach full plumage: Benson's white-throated birds, the 2 males beginning to acquire dark throat feathers, were collected in September and had fully ossified skulls.

The calls are unlike those of the two Mascarene species (Horne 1987, pers. obs.), and emphasize, as Benson (1971) suggested, that the Malagasy and Mascarene forms are not closely related.

MERLES OR BLACK BULBULS, alternative names for all *Hypsipetes* spp [tsorbe (v)]

M. Neither of us was readily able to distinguish the 2 forms in the field; plumages appeared to intergrade, but we did distinguish abundant short-billed muddy-grey birds with yellow to yellow-brown legs and feet (very dark in juveniles) from longer-billed more olive birds with flesh or horn-coloured legs and feet. Both had yellow to orange beaks and dark irises, and were moulting. Four of the olive type trapped at around 400 m above Miringoni proved to be Benson's (1960) *H. crassirostris moheliensis*, until then known from a single specimen collected in 1958 (Table 1). Juveniles had "orange-brown" primaries (cf. the query in Louette & Herremans's 1985b: 411-2). One of the trapped birds proved to be infected with trypanosomes and a *Haemoproteus* (Peirce & Cheke 1977). This form was quite common in the upland forest.

TABLE 1
Measurements of *Hypsipetes crassirostris moheliensis*

Date	Ring No. (Paris)	Age	Wing (mm)	Tail	Bill (skull)	Weight (g)	Moult score (Newton '66)	Caught by
18 Feb	GA 90671	Juvenile	109	—	—	65	10	ASC
18 Feb	GA 90672	„	115	—	—	61	26	ASC
18 Feb	GA 90673	Adult	125	—	—	68	86	ASC
24 Feb	—	„	(112.5)	(101)	29.5	58	80	AWD

Note: Bracketed measurements indicate incomplete growth.

The other form was thus Benson's *H. madagascariensis parvirostris*, and appeared to be confined to the lowlands. Merles were present at all altitudes. Louette's team's (Louette 1984b, Louette & Herremans 1985b) study has interpreted the species differently from Benson. The upland olive forms on both Moheli and Grande Comore are treated as 2 races of a new species *H. parvirostris* (the 19th century type is an olive bird from GC), and the lowland grey forms as *H.m. madagascariensis*. The large Moheli form thus becomes *H. parvirostris moheliensis*.

The lowland form was seen eating a large ant, and to extract a ?beetle from the base of a palm frond (*Phoenix* sp.); on 19 Feb a family group (2 ads. + 1 juv.) behind Bandaressalam were flycatching from trees.

GC. Merles with dark grey upperparts, pale to mid-grey underparts with "dull" coloured legs, not moulting, were seen at Hahaya and Boboni on 21 Feb. These were Benson's grey morph of *H. madagascariensis parvirostris*, i.e. *H.m. madagascariensis* of Louette & Herremans (1985b).

BLUE VANGA *Cyanolanius madagascarinus*

M. Only seen in the native forest above 500 m towards St-Antoine: a pair, and two singles, one giving a "coarse frog-like rattle", on 18 Feb. Formerly known in the Comores only from upland forest on Moheli, this species has recently been recorded on Grande Comore (Louette & Herremans 1982).

COMORO THRUSH *Turdus bewsheri* [lulu**, marrrta** (cf. Common Mynah)]

M. More common at Miringoni, where it extended into the plantations, than at Bandaressalam where it was seen only once, in secondary forest. At Miringoni/St-Antoine, birds were seen throughout the forest to the summit ridge. Some were caught and measured on 18 Feb. in native forest at c. 400 m (the juveniles were in spotty plumage typical of fledgling thrushes) (Table 2).

TABLE 2
Measurements of *Turdus bewsheri*

Ring No. (Paris)	Age	Wing (mm)	Weight (g)	Moult score (Newton 1966)	Caught by
GA 90670	Adult	105	65	36	ASC
GA 90674	Juv.	104	61	no moult	"
GA 90675	Adult	117	68	32	"
GA 90676	Juv.	109	59	no moult	"
GA 90677	Adult	(102)	57	18	"

Note: Adult No. 77 had very abraded wings; the juveniles appeared very recently fledged. One of the trapped birds was shown to be infected with microfilaria (Peirce & Cheke 1977).

This thrush is very long-legged, solitary and lives on the forest floor, in some ways recalling a *Pitta*. Call notes were a sharp *tchwit* and a merle-like whistle. Two old thrush-like nests, presumed to be of this species, were found near the trapping site 2 m up in a dead sapling and 4.5 m up a small tree on a branch rising at 45°. One bird was seen using clumsy acrobatics to reach the 7.5-15 cm long umbrella-shaped hanging fruit of an unidentified tree.

Benson (1960) reported thrushes as confined to forest, but Forbes-Watson (1969) saw one in an ylang-ylang plantation on Anjouan, and we found them in this and coconut plantations at Miringoni.

BRUSH WARBLERS *Nesillas* spp. [lulu**§ (cf. Comoro Thrush)]

M. Separation of the 2 *Nesillas* warblers proved easier than the merles. Benson (1960) did not realise that he had 2 species until he studied his collections and found he had specimens from Moheli of *N. typica* and also a smaller form which he described as *N. mariae*. At high levels (>400 m) in native forest behind Miringoni we found a common large greyish-brown semi-terrestrial warbler, while lower down (c. 150 m), and behind Bandaressalam at similar altitude, were smaller, greener, highly arboreal warblers in secondary vegetation. One of the former was trapped by AWD and shown to be *N.t. moheliensis*: wing 68, tail 82 (outer feathers 38), bill 16 (to skull), tarsus 26 mm, weight 24.25 g. This form has a relatively long tail and legs and short wings; Louette (1984b) gave the tarsi as averaging 26 mm for *typica* and 22 m for *mariae*, figures not given by Benson (1960). One was feeding a fledged but still short-tailed young at St-Antoine on 23 Feb.

It did not prove possible to trap the other form, the endemic *N. mariae*, but they were easily separable by the above characteristics and also by voice, and by their visibly shorter tails in conformity with Benson's original description. A pair was seen in the canopy of 4.5 m scrub by a stream at c. 150 m behind

Miringoni on 18 Feb, and 2 pairs, one at a nest, were watched in a clump of mangos *Mangifera indica* at about the same altitude on 20 & 26 Feb behind Bandaressalam; a group of 4 more were seen a little further up on the 20 Feb. The nest, under construction on 20 Feb, was 9 m up in a mango c. 15-20 m tall. It was on the end of a long horizontal branch, in foliage, and was a small cup constructed of moss and grass with an untidy dangle of bits of grass hanging under it. The nest was nearly complete and the birds were actively perfecting the cup, but were also seen adding a dead leaf, grass, and a tiny twig to the structure. They remained mostly in the canopy, though one bird came down to c. 1.25 m off the ground seeking nest material. They fed by leaf-gleaning.

Vocally the 2 forms were quite distinct. The upland *typica* had a "sharp broken staccato chatter - *kikakitikak* etc." with an insect-like quality, while the song was "a mixture of chattering and brief warbles". *N. mariae* had much squeakier calls, though of a similar staccato character: *chit-chat-chik*, written also as a "very squeaky sparrow chatter". The song was "a muddled staccato warble" with phrases reminiscent of *Terpsiphone bourbonnensis* subsong (see Horne 1987) or a "thick squeaky warble" (a different bird).

While the 2 taxa are close to each other, neither bears any resemblance in behaviour or voice to *Bebrornis*, and using these observations Diamond (1980) united *Bebrornis* with *Acrocephalus*, emphasising the distance from *Nesillas*. Furthermore the construction of the nest is different, and comparison of eggs in the Cambridge Zoology Museum shows that *N. typica* and *A. rodericanus* are very dissimilar in pattern (Cheke 1987c).

GC. A bird similar to the Moheli *typica* in behaviour and voice, but with a much shorter tail (i.e. Benson's *N.t. brevicaudata*) was seen at Boboni on 21 Feb. However a totally different bird (Diamond 1985), strongly resembling an *Acrocephalus/Bebrornis* was seen by AWD low down in wild raspberries amongst bananas in degraded forest which was being actively logged above Nioumbadjou on 27 Feb. It was "small, short-tailed, olive-grey, paler below with . . . eye-stripe". It called very like a '*Bebrornis*' but not often, responded to squeaking (as did *N. mariae*), but proved impossible to net. It did not resemble any of the possible migrant Acrocephaline or Hippolaid warblers known to AWD, and should be looked for by future visitors.

MADAGASCAR PARADISE FLYCATCHER *Terpsiphone mutata* [*ndjuru-djuru/mdzuru-dzuru* **, *se'elbon* ***]

M. The race on Moheli, *T.m. voelzkowiana*, is the least flamboyant of the Comoro races, and lacks a white male morph. The birds were common in all kinds of shrubby or forest vegetation from the coast to the ridge at St-Antoine, as Benson (1960) also found. Two adults (2016571♂/72♀) were trapped in native forest at c. 400 m behind Miringoni on 18 Feb: wings 72, 71 mm, weights 13.0, 12.1 g, moult-score (Newton 1966) 30, 0, respectively.

The song was transcribed as *tvisi hwi-hwen hwi-hwen hwi-hwen*, of similar quality to, but simpler than, the song of *Terpsiphone bourbonnensis* (pers. obs., Horne 1987), whose general 'jizz' it also resembles more closely than other paradise flycatchers (pers. obs. in Asia, Africa & the Seychelles; Cheke 1987a), although Benson (1971) was unsure of the relationship.

Flycatchers were seen feeding flying young on 3 occasions (17 & 22 Feb, Miringoni & Bandaressalam, all at low elevations), one of the adults involved having moulted or lost its entire tail.

GREEN SUNBIRD *Nectarinia notata* [*zuli sandrovi*** (“[bird which] makes the bananas born”)]

M. Widely but rather thinly distributed in forest at all altitudes, most frequent around 400-500 m above Miringoni. A female accompanied by a juvenile was seen on 18 Feb. One was seen probing banana *Musa sapientum* flowers for nectar at Bandaressalam – cf. the local name, and comments in Benson (1960) and Forbes-Watson (1969). A female with a brood patch was trapped by AWD at St-Antoine on 24 Feb: wing 71 mm, tail 40 mm, bill (to feathers) 34 mm, weight 20.0 g, no moult.

HUMBLLOT'S SUNBIRD *N. humbloti* [*verrea***§]

M. Found over the same range as the Green Sunbird (as noted by Benson 1960), but seen a little less often in forest, it also occurred in scrub and gardens at Bandaressalam/Fomboni. A pair was seen carrying food behind Bandaressalam on 16 Feb. Insect feeding by gleaning and hover-gleaning on coconut leaf-tips, and nectar feeding on a common *Impatiens* was noted at Bandaressalam. GC. Seen in scrub near Hahaya airport, 21 Feb.

MADAGASCAR WHITE-EYE *Zosterops maderaspatana* [*nyandrenghwa/nyandrenka***]

M. Rather frequent in pairs or small parties at low altitude in scrubby and forest vegetation, and seen up to c. 500 m behind Miringoni. A bird was flushed from a nest 2.5 m off the ground on a downward hanging branch of a *Macaranga* sp. at c. 400 m, Miringoni, 17 Feb; it could not be reached but small young were heard in it. White-eyes were seen gleaning insects in foliage on trees and on undergrowth, and eating over-ripe figs *Ficus* sp. This species has a very wide range of call-notes, and a *Serinus*-like song.

CARDINAL (MADAGASCAR FODY) *Foudia madagascariensis* [*mbera moro* (red mbera)]

M. Common, in places abundant, in secondary vegetation up to c. 100 m; at Miringoni only seen in the ylang-ylang (*Canarium*) plantations. Territorial density behind Bandaressalam was high, c. 2.5 per ha; in addition to territory-holding birds in red plumage, there were feeding flocks largely of brown birds, occasionally mixed with *Lonchura cucullata*. GC. Seen in scrub near Hahaya airport, 21 Feb.

COMORO FODY *F. eminentissima*

M. Regularly if thinly distributed through secondary forest and coconut plantations, and seen up to 600 m in native forest below St-Antoine. All birds seen were in eclipse, including one singing at Bandaressalam, 19 Feb, and at least 4 were noted to be in tail moult. This confirms Benson's (1960) observations of an earlier breeding season than for the Cardinal, though he doubted whether *F. eminentissima* had an eclipse plumage. Non-breeding plumage has since been recorded on Aldabra (Frith 1976) and is confirmed here for the Comores. An adult was seen feeding a fledged young in a large *Ficus* at Miringoni on 17 Feb; the parent was gleaning insects from leaf-bases. Other birds were seen “poking about in ripe figs and rotten branch stumps”. One was seen to place an inflorescence of an unidentified mimosoid tree under its foot on a branch, and then remove each floret and mandibulate it to extract nectar, as described by Melville (1979) for the Cardinal.

HOUSE SPARROW *Passer domesticus* [*mbera* (cf. Cardinal)]

M. Common at Bandaressalam and Fomboni; not seen at Miringoni. This

suggests a decline since 1958, as Benson (1960) recorded it in "practically every human settlement" on Moheli. Benson (1962) recorded *nyuni* as the name for House Sparrows on Moheli – this was the word ASC was given for 'bird'. GC. Seen in Moroni.

COMMON MYNAH *Acridotheres tristis* [*marrrta*** (presumably from the French 'martin'; cf. Comoro Thrush)]

M. Common in lowland areas, not seen above 300 m at Miringoni. One was seen with a party of fledged young at Bandaressalam on 15 Feb. GC. Recorded near Hahaya airport, 21 Feb.

The following common resident or regular migrant birds were also seen, or local names were recorded for them. (R): resident, (M): migrant. B: Bandaressalam, F: Fomboni, H: Hoani, Ha: Hamba, Mi: Miringoni.

HERONS (in general) [*gongomoro***].

LITTLE GREEN HERON *Butorides striatus*. (R) M. Singles on shore: Mi, B.

GREY HERON *Ardea cinerea*. (R) M. 1 on the shore: B.

BLACK KITE *Milvus migrans* [*kōz**, *kozi**, *boondi**]. (R) M. Rather few: Mi, B, H. GC. absent Moroni to Hahaya.

HELMETED GUINEA FOWL *Numida meleagris* [*kangga*] (domestic only).

WADER sp. [*tsurruru*** (? ex Mascarene Creole 'trululu' for a species of beach-dwelling crab)].

RINGED PLOVER *Charadrius hiaticula*. (M) M. 2 on shore B.

GREY PLOVER *C. squatarola* [*chidankaba*** (? this sp.)]. (M) M. 1-2 on shore: Mi, B.

WHIMBREL *Numenius phaeopus* [*ninimbwa***]. (M) M. 1-2 on shore: Mi, B.

COMMON SANDPIPER *Tringa hypoleucos*. (M) M. 1 by lowland stream, Mi.

GREENSHANK *T. nebularia*. (M) M. 1 on rocky shore: B.

OLIVE PIGEON *Columba arquatrix* [*nyakangga* (v)]. (R) M. only 1, above B.

FERAL PIGEON *C. livia* [*ndiua** (cf. Fischer 1949 for GC/Anjouan)]. (R) M. Not recorded, possibly an oversight in note-taking.

RING-NECKED DOVE *Streptopelia capicola* [*chicoro**]. (R) M. Noted at B, H. GC. Hahaya.

TAMBOURINE DOVE *Turtur tympanistria* [*chi-du-du**]. (R) M. Only recorded at B.

BARN OWL *Tyto alba* [*bundokudjo***]. (R) M. An owl, presumably this species, heard at Mi, where said by R. Legrand to be common.

PALM SWIFT *Cypsiurus parvus* [*chiriviriviri*** (that which passes & re-passes), *diwindivi*** §]. (R) M. Frequent at B, H & Mi. GC. Moroni.

MALAGASY KINGFISHER *Alcedo (cristata) vintsioides* [*nyunimbro*** (bird of the river)]. (R) M. Not seen.

YELLOW WHITE-EYE *Zosterops senegalensis*. (R) GC. scrub near Hahaya airport.

BRONZE MANNIKIN *Lonchura cucullata* [*nyachendje**]. (R) M. in open areas: Mi, H, B.

PIED CROW *Corvus albus* [*gowa** (v)]. (R) M. few; B, F, H, Mi. GC. near Hahaya airport.

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APPENDIX

The former occurrence of African Green Pigeons on Anjouan and Grande Comore

The first formal record of green pigeons in the Comores was 4 collected on Moheli in 1958 by Griveaud and described by Benson (1960) as a new race, *griveaudi*, of *Treeron australis*. At the same time Benson claimed that there was "no evidence of its occurrence on the other three islands". There are in fact quite strong indications of past presence of the species at least on Anjouan and probably also Grande Comore.

Bewsher (*in* Newton 1877), a conscientious observer and collector, listed birds he saw on Anjouan but did not collect, including a "green and brown pigeon". Gevrey (1870) included "pigeon vert" as "TC" (= *très commun*) in his list of the Comorian fauna. His list is far from complete, but there is no sign that Gevrey had any significant information from Moheli, nor would he have described as very common a bird confined to the forests of only one island. Finally

Fischer (1949) glosses 'verinadabu', the same name I collected in Moheli, as "pigeon vert"; he explicitly says his work was based on the language of educated Grand Comorians with additions from Anjouan. Thus as late as the 1940s a word for green pigeon was current on Grande Comore and/or Anjouan, so the birds possibly survived until relatively recently. However neither Griveaud (in litt. 1975) nor Legrand's Anjouan contacts (in litt. 1976) had heard tell of green pigeons there. Anjouan is a densely populated island with little surviving forest, but the birds could have escaped notice more easily on the larger and less deforested Grande Comore, where they should be looked for.

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The correct specific name for the Akepa of Oahu (Drepanidini, *Loxops*)

by Storrs L. Olson

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The 4 insular populations of the Hawaiian finch (Drepanidini) known in some quarters under the native name "Akepa," are now generally regarded as subspecies of *Loxops coccinea* (Gmelin) [*Loxops coccineus* if one regards "-ops" as masculine, following the unfortunate imposition of Art. 30a(ii) (ICZN, 1985)]. These 4 constitute *Loxops* in the strict sense, the type of the genus being the *Fringilla coccinea* of Gmelin (1788). Whether more than one species is included in this group of 4 is still the subject of investigation, but each discrete population (Hawaii, Maui, Oahu and Kauai) differs in plumage from the others and is recognisably distinct at least at the subspecific level.

The form from Oahu was first collected by Andrew Bloxam in 1825, who described it under the name *Fringilla rufa* (Bloxam 1827). Rothschild (1893), in the erroneous belief that all previously taken specimens of *Loxops* (*sensu stricto*) had come from Hawaii and were referable to *L. coccinea*, described a specimen in his own collection, the last to be taken on Oahu, as *Loxops wolstenholmei*. He later found (Rothschild 1895) that Bloxam's specimens, which I have also examined, agreed in plumage with the Oahu form. Therefore, he resurrected Bloxam's name *rufa* and placed *wolstenholmei* in synonymy. The name *Loxops rufa*, or *Loxops coccinea rufa*, has been in all but universal use for the Oahu bird ever since. I have examined microfilms of Bloxam's field notes and other records in the British Museum (Natural History) which indicate that all the specimens of birds he obtained in the Hawaiian islands, save for one of *Chasiempis sandwichensis*, came from Oahu, thus further confirming what Rothschild had established on the basis of plumage.

As it turns out, however, Rothschild's name must be employed after all, because *Fringilla rufa* Bloxam, 1827, is a junior homonym of *Fringilla rufa* Wilson, 1811, which, as established by Bonaparte (1824), is a synonym of *Fringilla iliaca* Merrem 1786, the Fox Sparrow of North America. Stejneger (1900) called attention to the preoccupation of *Fringilla rufa* Bloxam some 85 years ago, but his remarks have been entirely overlooked. Because Bloxam's name is clearly unavailable for the species in question, the Akepa of Oahu must